

Dear Members of the Commission,

As a frequent flier, and also as a subway commuter who must endure cell-phone abuse in confined spaces every day, I strongly urge you to maintain the current ban on airborne use of mobile phones. Polls show that an overwhelming majority of airline passengers -- and airline professionals -- similarly want the ban kept in place. Lifting or weakening this ban would be contrary to the public interest.

If the FCC lifted this ban, the public would basically lose all the progress we achieved when regulators barred smoking onboard planes. Indeed, the use of mobile phones in confined spaces presents an infuriating "second-hand smoke" problem for which there is no obvious physical or regulatory mitigation. Indeed, the notion of airlines' creating "quiet sections" is as absurd as the fiction that planes' old "nonsmoking sections" really protected their occupants from smoke drifting back through the cabin.

Having to deal with fellow passengers' screeching phones, and loud conversations, would provoke "air rage" in a context where tension has ruled ever since the 9/11 attacks. An already stressful situation would become much more so, to everyone's disadvantage.

Because you are frequent travelers yourselves, I urge you to walk back into the coach section of your plane before take-off, and notice how loud the thicket of cell-phone chatter and ring-tone idiocy has become. Now extrapolate that irritation to a five-hour flight aboard which you are trying to sleep: this would be a simply intolerable situation.

As one recent flight sat on the runway, I was jolted by the idiot behind me yelling an obscenity into his mobile phone (i.e., my ear) -- to a buddy elsewhere on the same plane. Hee-haw! This is the kind of misbehavior that you would be unleashing, in droves, if you loosened or lifted the ban on in-flight cellular communications.

There might be a narrow case for allowing certain non-voice wireless services to be transmitted in flight, such as text messaging. If so, any frequencies opened up for this purpose should be carefully protected against abuse to make voice calls -- either by continuing to block voice-related technical protocols, or by setting a very slow speed limit.

Still, I would oppose even allowing in-flight text messaging. Users of keypad-equipped phones would still disturb adjacent passengers with key clicks, constant idiotic beeping, loud ring tones, and other annoyances. In truth, no passenger's time is so valuable that they deserve continuous wireless contact at the expense of disturbing other passengers.

The current arrangement -- seat-back phones with high per-minute costs -- does an excellent job of filtering out the few passengers who really need to make an occasional in-flight call. Let this happy situation continue.

Please maintain the current ban against using wireless communications on airborne aircraft. Thank you for considering

these comments.

Respectfully yours,  
Michael Katz